A Note on Climbing Ability in Tiger Snakes *(Notechis scutatus)* and Predation on Arboreal Nesting Birds

BY GARRY A. WEBB*

Australian elapid snakes have been reported preying on ground nesting birds (Anon, 1919; Cogger, 1979; Le Souf, 1911). To my knowledge there have been no published observations of elapid predation on arboreal nesting birds. Shine (pers. comm.) removed several nestling Magpies *(Gymnorhina tibicen)* from the stomach of a Tiger snake *(Notechis scutatus)* which was found in a hollow limb of a tree in the Armidale area.

Climbing ability in Tiger snakes has been documented previously (Heatwole *et al.*, 1973). They observed a 50 cm long Tiger snake climbing to a height of 10 metres in a large radiata pine *(Pinus radiata)*. Similarly, the observation reported here involves a Tiger snake climbing a Radiata Pine.

At 1800 hrs. on the 2nd January 1981, a Tiger snake approximately one metre in length was observed in a 15 cm diameter radiata pine in Bondi State Forest, N.S.W. The snake was tightly coiled around a whorl of branch stubs 1.6 metres above the ground (Figure 1A). In attempting to get a closer view I disturbed the snake which quickly descended, partially sliding (with its tail still anchored around the tree) and then falling once it relinquished its hold (Fig. 1B).

When the tree was inspected closely a Scarlet Robin *(Petroica bicolor)* nest, containing a single nestling, was found

Fig. 1A: Tiger snake coiled around a young Radiata Pine in Bondi State Forest, N.S.W. Note partially overgrown branch stubs left by pruning.

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Fig. 1B: Tiger snake descending from the tree using branch stubs as support. The whorl of the branch stubs shown in Fig. 1A is at the top of the figure.

in the fork of the lowest branch, 2.4 metres above the ground. It would appear that the snake was attempting to reach the nest to prey on the young bird.

The climbing method used by this snake was not actually observed. The Tiger snake observed by Heatwole *et al.*, (1973) utilized the deeply furrowed bark, to move upwards by concertina movement, and branches for looping its body. The Radiata Pine in this observation had neither furrowed bark nor low level branches and therefore the snake could not have used this method. A more likely method of ascent would be the use of the whorls of partially overgrown branch stubs in the tree trunk, left by earlier pruning. These are spaced at varying intervals, short enough for the snake to be able to raise the front portion of its body, loop around the next whorl of stubs and then pull the rest of its body up. When first observed the snake had the front portion of its body raised and was probably attempting to reach the next whorl of stubs.

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A Short History of The Discovery and Naming of Banksias in Eastern Australia

Part III Richard Anthony Salisbury

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Richard Anthony Markham, who later changed his name to Salisbury as a condition of inheriting a large fortune, described two species of banksias in his "Prodromus Stirpium in Horto ad Chapel Alerton Vigentium (1796). These were *B. serratifolia* and *B. aspleniifolia*.

In 1809 Joseph Knight produced a work entitled "On the Cultivation of Plants belonging to the Natural Order of Proteeae". Three *Banksia* species were described from material in cultivation. A great deal of controversy surrounds this work as it was believed to emanate not from the pen of Joseph Knight but was partly if not wholly written by Salisbury. The preface to the work has a curious acknowledgement to Salisbury and there is also a hint against accusations of plagiarism.

"Perhaps few works have greater claim to originality than the present, not a single line being copied from any other. For the names only of the different Genera, their various authors are quoted, except those of R. A. Salisbury, Esq. whose manuscripts have been found useful in every sheet."

Knight's publication appeared in August of 1809. The botanical establishment of the day attributed the work to Salisbury and saw in it an attempt to publish genera and species described by Brown in January 1809, when he read his paper "On the Proteaceae of Jussieu" (Brown, 1810a) before the Linnean Society.

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